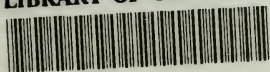


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THE BLUE CRANE
and SHORE SONGS

THE BLUE CRANE *and* SHORE SONGS

By

IVAN SWIFT

Author of "Fagots of Cedar"



NEW YORK CITY
JAMES T. WHITE & COMPANY
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For the privilege of printing these verses
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*The Independent, The Outlook, The
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DEDICATED TO THE HOSPITALITY OF OUR CITY
HOMES—SIGNIFICANT TO DWELLERS IN A PLACE
OF SHORE SONGS.

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THE BLUE CRANE
and SHORE SONGS

*In the half-light of my hearth fire
I look up through my dormer to the night—
And see the balsam rafters of my loft reflected,
Like a firm structure for the frail sky;
And I see, this side of them, the stars—
The Big Bear and the Pole-star,
Swung like little lanterns from my rafters.*

*That house is not too small, I think, nor ill-conceived
That shelters him who built it and roofs in
A few stars like the Pleiades.*

THE BLUE CRANE

A CROSS nine miles of calm water—
Water yet stained by the bleeding hoofs
Of the hour-gone sun—
Skillagalee Light burns like a spot-welder
Riveting a purple island to the rim of the world.
From my heavy Dutch-door pane,
When my back is to the candles and the green globe
Of my orbit-lamp, I can make out the little eye
Shining like a moored star—
Warning from my coast
All but mariners gone mad.

Two tallow dips are on my mantel,
Serving their little utmost to my fathers
Who command me to save this landmark.
How much larger is the light of Skillagalee,
Builded by engineers of the new time!
Yet the candles are at hand and of more comfort,
As the moths testify—
Though my shrine is often their burial-place.

This house, now in the making, is of old timber
from the beaches,
Old-weather with green hangings and a Navajo
And symbols of eternal things—
No longer reckoned so.
It is a quiet place full of eloquent whispers
In summer, and cedar trees perfume the lofts.
The white birch stands a trim sentry
Against the boulder patterns,
And a blue crane is at peace with the night,
On the furthestmost rock along shore.

After my years of unquietness
This house is as a candle in the dark;
But it seems a burial-place of something I have
known,
Or something that has been a part of me in cities,
Or something I have sensed among romping children
And the reminiscences of kinsfolk
Who pass time in homely converse.

I have prepared my house to my liking,
And it lights a corner of the wilderness;
But moth-men find this a burial-place
Of a life to their liking,
And seek the larger light on the runway of the
loud ships—

The light that shines like Skillagalee
Across the bleeding foot-prints of the sun.

At times I seem the blue crane
On the furthestmost rock;
Yet the spirits of my fathers
Have aided in the laying of these stones
And the framing of these rafters,
And the Indians upon whose graves its corners are
 builted
Have signed these plans
And are my silent and wise company.

Let me be the man, on the rough coast,
My house of seasoned timber;
Though I seem at times like the blue crane
On the furthestmost rock.
Somewhere, on other shores, in peace with night,
Are my fellows, content with little candles
In quietness, keeping the landmarks—
Content with a strong house of clean faith
And removed from the light of Skillagalee
Nine miles across the water.

HOME

IN the evening after the rain,
At home with the North and the trees,
I turn from the world again
And find me a world in these.

I searched for a joy in the lands
Of castle and kopje and sun,
And found what I sought—in the sands
Where the journey was lightly begun.

The glories of continents seen
And all that my ears have heard,
Are lost in a garden's green
And the chirp of a nested bird.

ALONG THE HARBOR SHORE

I LIKE the days of northern Spring
When leaves emerge the bud,
The birches turn a tender green
And maple-blossoms blood.

A sail is golden in the sun,
Against the purple hill;
A gull is high on silent wing,
The swallows never still.

Where westing sun and fog are met,
Along the harbor-shore,
An aged fisher reels a net
And mutters primal lore.

He is not of the Spring of life,
Yet find we equal cheer;—
He, that the old ship weathered through,
I, that the new may clear.

TO A GROSBEAK IN THE GARDEN

WHEN through the heaviness and clamouring
throng

Of mortal ways I hear the mellow song
Of birds, the birds seem sent to me.
If this be my insanity,
As men will measure it—so let it be!

When shadows that no will can drive away
Entomb me—then no sermon blesseth day,
More true and sweet than that pure note
My ear hath caught afloat,
Aflame from the rose-breast's fervent throat.

Thou, crimson-caped messenger of God,
Seem'st not to feel the thorned and bruising rod
Of Life—thy hours are joyously beguiled
With melody so mild,
So wild!—as winds in the heart of some slip-trammel
child!

Full knowing that thy living days are brief
Thou grudgest even a breath for sober grief;
Thy poems are scattered free, without a name,
Nor hast thou thought of fame—
Neither from the eagle taken shame!
Is *my* unpaid aspiring yet my blame?

The world is wide 'twixt man and worlds divine,
And hearts are dull to such a song as thine;
But *I* have heard. Sing on, from tree to tree,
As thou hast sung to me—
And more shall find the God that guideth thee!

THE HUMMING-BIRD

WHEN languorous noons entreat the summer
sky,
And restive spirits vex the ways of men
In vain emprise; within my garden then
Will I elect to let the world go by,
And watch the humming-bird. Not seen to fly,
He comes and vanishes and comes again
And sips the sweets of honeysuckles when
Their lips are frail—but leaves them not to die.

So I have thought how good it were to be
This ruthless corsair, bent on such pursuit,
Against the wear of my foreplanning hours;—
How good it were to live thus liegelessly
Upon the world's unreckoned blossom-loot—
Yet spare from any harm its guarded flowers!

IF I WERE PAN

DEEP in the wood across the way,
I dreamed that I was Pan today,
And tuned me joyous pipes to play.
The fronds came out to me,
The nymphs and graces three—
The world was Arcady!
For I was Pan and this was Spring!

I played the part of Pan today
And laughed at mortals on the way,
But no man heard and none would stay.
Their ears were sorely dull,
And sad their eyes and full
Of pelf and pride and mull;—
And spring to them is never Spring!

I know that I was Pan a day,
But would that I were Pan alway,
With ears like his and eyes of May,
To hear and feel and see!—
Pipe tunes to bird and bee
And set the world's heart free
With laughter, love and light of Spring!
I would if I were Pan.

VENICE

IT has been mine to know, in younger days,
That love, in fullness, finds no utterance;
No mortal word can serve, much less enhance
A perfect thing. The wondrous Nippon vase
Desponds my tongue; the while to ruder clays
Of dull unpromising the Muses dance
And wake with hearts of wild exuberance!
So Fancy weaves on umber warp her praise.

No song of mine confirms that I have seen
San Marco's opal dome and wept before
The Campanile's fall. I have not sung
Ca d'Oro's grace nor of the light serene
That never was on other seas, Maggior
Venezia!—to me thy bells have rung.

ASSOCIATION

BEYOND the shore-guard pines the beach of sand
Stretched off as warm and yielding as your hand
That northern summers past had laid in mine.
And yet the place had set no moving sign
Within my heart—too full of you for words,
Too glad for tears, too wrapt to hear the chords
Of Nature's playing. So I said no spell
Attached to this of import to compel
My song; though we had lived a thousand days
And grown to comradeship and mutual ways
Within its keeping. Thus when love was young
And you were by my side no song was sung.
In joy and fulsome praise I had not thought
Upon the frequent scene—I had not caught
Its inward meaning, as when oft alone
I found some mystic message in a stone.
The silent shade and your sweet gladness—
These were enough. Somehow the poet-madness
Comes not of soft content and troths unbroken,
And of such perfect peace no words are spoken.

Today I am alone, for my offense—
Alone and penitent and wondering whence
This golden light and gold-green of the lake,
The waves, dull symphony and dunes awake
With laughing spirits of the happy dead

Whose cast-off pains our birth inherited.
The dancing trees lean down with precious gifts
Of perfume, every tiny plant uplifts
Its tendrils to my touch and points to skies
Of essent opal where the free gull flies
To meet his mate beyond some blessed isle.

Would I, as he, to mine might fly the while,
Or she to me—yea, thou to me, and *here*,
Where days that are departed are twice dear
And every leaf and twig bears memories
Like faint, far bells across the midnight seas!

Alone I wait I know not what strange word;
Alone I pray I know not what vague sign!
But where we met and your sweet voice was heard
Has been God's temple—and shall be my shrine!

BUT WHERE THY PORT?

THE bay is white with sail
Uncertain bound—
Vain ships that seek no grail,
Proud ships that bear no bale,
And ships aground.

Like moths they dot the day,
Nor heed the chart;
At dusk they pale away,
Unlit in the evening gray,
And so depart.

O, ships of changing hue
And shallow court,
Ye wing across the blue
And swing the season through—
But where thy port?

I wait here on the shore
To sail, afar,
The wider sea that bore
And bears for evermore
The steadfast star.

And soon, I pray, shall come,
As comes the Dawn,

With muffled oar and drum,
Unfaltering and by some
Sea-mystery drawn—

The ship that sails from where
The autumn moon
Hath sailed; and I shall fare
With her—my heart's corsair,
To ports of Noon!



THE NURSE

I KNEW a maid of Devon Town
Who wore upon her sleeve
A red, red cross to which a crown
Were scarce a make-believe.

White was her cap, as early snow,
Upon her auburn hair;
And Devon's dreaming gardens know
The grace their daughters wear.

Her voice was like a camel-bell
Across the wastes of Dawn;
Her liquid eyes a fabled well—
Of all delusion drawn.

She stepped as lightly as the hern
That guards a tender brood;
And such a heart!—it seemed to burn,
A torch of angelhood.

Her brow was as a marble thing;
Her breasts alone as fair—
And Martha's kin are wondering
No child was mothered there.

But who can know the mother-loss
And pangs of birth she bore?—
Who reckons not the red, red cross
That on her sleeve she wore!

A thousand brides of broken weft
Have shared their grief with her;
A thousand dying men had left
Their love as lief with her.

And all the loves of all the men
Who die across the sea—
Will meet again and greet her when
She homes her heart with me!

A VISION OF SLEEP

(*Tone Picture*)

I WALKED in a verdureless park
The morn of a night of cold rain.
The sky was a desolate gray
As sadly I stood by the way,
Beset of unnameable pain
From the past and the oncoming dark.

Then magical came through the wet
A silvery car and more slow
And silent than seraphim feet
So led by a spirit to meet
The soul of the humble below,
As a queen and a vagrant have met.

Your wonderful face and a veil,
Your delicate hand at the gear,
And gowned as the Dawn as a bride—
You seemed but to be and to glide
Like a wraith in the mist of the year—
So silent and searching and pale.

You seemed not to see or to know
My presence nor answer my call,
But you paused for the touch of a tear
And turned half away as to hear

A voice from the place of the fall
Of the race in the longer ago.

You saw not and heard not but knew
That the soul that your soul sought was near;
You spoke not nor smiled but were glad.
I woke not, to know I was sad,
Till a bird-note came tenderly clear
And into the dawn you withdrew.



THE GIFT OF THE SHIPS

RESTIVE and unconquered are the little seas
That Holland from her green bowl fills
With wine of tulips. In the everlasting breeze
A hundred lug-sails whip a challenge to the whirring
mills.

Sweet and real and glad is every day
To its good people—all as ruddy as the clover
Knee-deep to the mottled cows, and gay
As the swift cloud that sweeps cool shadows over.

I have not understood what vague unrest
Misleads so blessed a folk to our unhappy shore;
But I must think, as always, God plans best—
For you and I have met and ask no more.

I ask no more, for that long-cherished and most
dear—

The loveliness of hyacinths, is in your hair!
You ask no more—has not your ancient prayer
To be a queen been answered when I crown you
here?

To a New Amsterdam Maid.

SEAL OF THE NORTH

AGES ago when the Dawn first lifted,
Audrey, you lay in the far lake-land—
Under the pines where the sands were sifted,
And touched my untouched hand.

Your hair was there as the beach-grass blowing;
Your eyes—and the sea-wet stones were those;
Your flesh was one with the soft surf flowing,
Your blush with the frail wild-rose.

Your blood was drained from the sun's red setting,
Your grace from the virgin-white birch tree;
You breathe with the pure, cool breeze begetting
The Spring's young ecstasy!

Your lyric laugh and the tears, all tender,
Keep to the deeps of a nature-heart
Long reft in the snow-land's still cold splendor—
You in the moons apart.

I WOULD NOT BRING YOU TEARS

WHEN Nature grieves
In some unwonted pain,
And feels her leaves
Droop under blighting stain,
Her kindly curtain falls
Against our view,
And lone in her gray walls
She broods the dark day through.

Bereft of joys
The painter takes her mood—
His brush employs,
Upon a solemn wood
At dusk, the sombre hue.
When glad and young
He paints the morning dew
And skies where larks have sung.

So bear with me
If I seem far today.
May it not be
That well am I away?
My canvas tells the pain
Of loss and fears—
My hour is cold, gray rain.
I would not bring you tears.

You knew me, dear,
When Fortune played me fair;
Then was I near
And gladness kissed your hair.
So might I come again—
When golden light
Comes through the cold, gray rain,
And morn comes through the night.



THEN SHOULD YOU KNOW

ON shores beneath the green flare of the north.
For weary days the elements have crossed
The peaceful seasons and the low skies tossed
With melancholy gray. It seemed henceforth
There could be no more sun nor laughing flowers,
No golden morn and no glad birds afield.
Such time man's faith is frail and strong hearts yield
The truce of hope against the sullen powers.

If so the light of day should no more shine
Upon green islands and the purple sea,
And moon and stars should fail and cease to be,
Even as candles spent in some dark mine—
Then should you know the deeps of my despair,
The Hagar heart and thirst uncomforted,
When we have quarreled—the fault upon my head—
And alien lovers stroke your weeping hair.

If you could be some sad-souled Eskimo,
Pent in his lodge of ice through endless years
Of starless night, when quick upon his spears
The flowering noon should break—then you would
know

How sweet is your returning grace to me,
How holier than heaven your guileless eyes
And grateful your forgiveness! So replies
God to the lovelorn in Eternity.

I CANNOT COURT YOUR FICKLE SPRING

I MAY not stay in this roof-place,
And yet I would.

Your Spring is teasing to embrace
My solitude,
And like to win. The memory of her grace
Is light upon dark ways
And fills a little room with singing gladness
When worlds abroad are dumb in winter sadness.

Yet I must doubt I could be true—
And yield to follow.

My heart's own Spring I still pursue
And its wild swallow.

I cannot court your fickle Spring, now due
On lanes of hill and hollow:—
Her carpetings of moss and yellow flowers
But lead to summer heat and slothful hours.

No, lock me in these narrow walls and leave—
I yet could sing.

A lovely little maid of Kiev
Hath been *my* Spring!

Your winter scarce intended to forebring
The gift of days I grieve
To part from, but only summer sadness
Attends your briefer Spring—to vex my year of
gladness.

COULD I LOVE ANOTHER YOU?

MY Love hath locks of hazel hair
And eyes of tender blue;
She's little, lithe and debonair
And wears a tiny shoe.
O Curly Locks, of lovely hair
And laughing tear as clear as dew!
O Cherry Lips and Bonny Fair—
I wish you would be true!
But could I love another You
As once I loved the You I knew—
The truant eye and taunting air,
The elfish laugh and lips of rue?

My Love hath banks of beauty-locks
And ears of rose-of-dawn;
Her tongue's a hundred silver clocks,
Her movements like the fawn.
She makes and mends her tiny frocks
Of wool and dainty lawn,
And feeds her father's hungry flocks
And sings at early morn.
O, would I had not lingered on
Her wistful waiting at the docks!
But lassies and a laughing Faun
Are lithe as love and lightly gone!

All day my Love's a busy bee,
At dawn a lark, a flower at noon;
At eve a drooping willow tree
And sleeping moth-of-moon.
I weave my tributes into tune,
But sigh in secrecy—
The lily and the clair-de-lune
Are fair but ever faded soon
And never true to me!
The morn hath passed; and now the noon;
The night will be a thankless boon—
But sweet is Memory!

I'LL LIFT MY HEAD A KING

THY people's veins have known a royal blood—
Kosciuszko and great lovers of high deeds,
Dawn singing, nightly toasts to grief, prayer
beads

To Liberty. Chopin hath understood,
And kin was that proud princess who had wooed
To Poland victories the war-spent breeds
Of Bonaparte—and mourned the broken reeds
Of his weak pledge to lesser womanhood.

When battle fields deprive me of my games
Of hazzard and old aspirations lie
Heaped on the rocks of some far St. Helene—
I'll lift my head a king, who then reclaims
His holier legions, and to foes reply:—
*Reap dust! A throne will stand where Love hath
been!*

THE SAVING

THE rose that bloomed but yesterday
And gathered to its lips the dews
Of heaven, is strewn upon the way
That men profane and storms abuse.

Its heart and yours cannot but choose
The blight the evil seasons set;
And as their gladness gardens lose,
Your tender cheeks with tears are wet.

Mayhap the flowers fade with pain
And fall from vine and life alike;
But come the Spring and deeper rain
To quicken grief and withered spike.

The winds that burn across the heart
Are keen but kinder than we know—
They rend the bloom and branch apart,
But seeds to farther sands will blow.

The vainer symbols come and go,
But nobler gifts shall vie with chance;
A lonely soul in faith may grow
And Love outlive earth's circumstance.

OUTSIDE THE GATE

A GAIN this hour, this memorable hour when you,
Half-faltering, pleaded on bended knees and knew
My mercy frail—this hour again did God instate
His angels and their swords across the Eastern Gate,
For that I broke a woman's heart and closed the door
Against her bleeding. Beaten, penitent and poor
I went into the outer dark and fell in prayer
To turn again and kiss, more holily, your hair—
Kiss but your unresponsive hair and weep
My wretchedness upon Love's grave. So beg you
keep,

Though I come not again, throw not away
The treasured rose-leaves of that older day
When hope and youth gave their elusive sign
That soon—ah, futile pledge!—thou shouldst be
mine.

I cry the sad, unanswered cry of Cain, and yet,
May I not know, O woman pitiful, that wet
With thy forgiving tears is that same fallen hair
I prayed of God to kiss in my despair?

THE POET'S SHIFT

I SAW them there behind the glass—
Red rose, sweet-pea and violet,
Lily and pink and mignonette—
Persuading me; but I must pass.

What would she give if she could know
It hurt my heart to pass them so?—
When she loves rose and mignonette
And dotes upon the violet!

What would I give if these could grow
Along the wayside as I pass!—
And not behind a window-glass
For profiting or idle show!

But summer comes and some day yet
We'll gather worlds of mignonette,
Where flowers are free and summers long!
Till then my love must live in song!

THE ODALISK

OF'TIMES in these our passion-resting hours,
When the light-mist of early twilight
Veils the spectral mosque-tips,
And all the silver bells in still suspense
Await the towered muezzin's call
To prayer—the soft dew-gathering time
When rose-perfumes from our seraglio garden
Float low and deep upon my idle sense—
Then have I dreamed a dream,
Though it be all a fancy-fabric,
Makes for peace to you and me, Fatima.

I have dreamed of other times and lands,
Of far-called women freely born—
Free to choose and free of any master
And of Moslem power—all save Christian creeds.
In these, my reveries, the winds
From over seas will bear the sobs
Of childless wives, and then the cries
Of many children left of mothers
Weeping for the fathers strange!
I hear of marriage-beds of brides unloved
And maidens solitary all their days
In pining for some heart they move not;
And it has come to me—ah, truly false—
That those most virtuous are most bereft,

Without abode or any resting place
Or sympathy's caress to bless their sleep—
And this because of *goodness* and the hope
Of some out-lying, loveless Paradise to come!
So, I am told that in that country ruled
Without a king, the ways of freedom
Are not free, and woman's liberty
Is woman's reigning woe.
Her fickle fury toys unsavingly,
And, being free, men turn unscathed
Away, weary of play, to be the masters
Men can be! And woman—
Worn of trifling, stale of beauty—lies
Remembered in her obloquy, or, worse, forgot!—
A slave abject to self-invented custom!

And you and I, Fatima—we would not,
From our sweet certainty and guardian walls,
Go in those ways of freedom-woe
An hour's apart—but we should rend
Our matted hair, to be forgiven our dalliance,
And would turn our troubled faces back
To him, the Radiant One, our master!

GATES OF BRASS

A SINGLE taper, flaming dim and low,
Played fitfully on relic altar-gold;
Thru windows wrought with miracles of old
Fell faint the saffron of the afterglow.

Before the penance-bench Sir Hardistan,
Scarce more than youth, of sturdy limb and fair.
Knelt down as under longer years' despair
That marked his brow with age ere age began.

Within the shadow stooped the solemn priest,
In patience with the sorrows of the years—
His cup of life o'erfilled of other's tears,
Had spilled his tragedy as theirs increased.

"Sir Knight, I keep the refuge of the poor—
Here knees of plaintive misery are bent
When worldly wares and light of life are spent.
Thou'rt not of these, but yet in strength secure."

"Father, I wander thru the endless night,
And the pale moon to me appears but rare.
I seek, the last, they famed candle-flare
To light my steps and stumbling steed aright."

“What meanest thou, Sir Knight?—Hast naught of home?”

“Aye, Father, home—such home as all men seek,
And wife and child, and stables of the sheik,
And gold to grace a triumphry of Rome.”

“Grieve not, Sir Knight, if erst thy jousting failed.”

“No conflict but a conquest, holy one;
The bravest have engaged me and are done
With tournaments, whilst I am victor hailed.”

“Find'st thou no weal in neighbor, friend or kin?”

“Thy pardon, sire—thou speak'st in language worn.

Can mortal fellowship be bred of scorn?
The wolf am I; the whimpering folds are men.”

“Mayhap thy alms are sown to thankless soil.”

“Alms? Alms? Wouldst fling thy beads to craven oaves?

My gift is steady steel, outlasting loaves!
But haste!—the serpent Night doth loose her coil!”

“Haste romps, Sir Knight, without the cloister gates—

With such as thou on worldly roads it runs,
In vain pursuit of far retreating suns!
My humble larva will serve but him who waits.

“The Sangreal lay not the wanton’s way!

God’s love for love; His mercy for thine own!

Turn back whence thou hast come—unarmed,
alone!

Beyond the east awaits the dawn of day!”

MY TAPER’S RECOMPENSE

MY candle burned for long to those fair days
When chivalry and modest worth held true
The scale of life; and then would I pursue
In fancy backward up those older ways,
To peace! The modern fabric wants the grays
And love-care that our mother’s sampler knew;
The world takes on a false, fantastic hue,
And hearts and homes are wrought of sordid clays.

But here are truth and sweetness of the old,
Set with the art and splendor of the new,
Like strands of silver thread among the gold;
That silence-charm, the heritage of few,
· Frail beauty and the purity of tears—
All saved in thee to pay my waiting years!

THE INVENTOR

A SAD man lived in the years of dark
And numbered the pains of dearth.
He prayed of the gods a sign and spark
To lift the burden and light the ark
For the sons of his weary earth.

He took for his tithe the tangled thorn
That falls to our foretime dreams—
The hate of the loved and the loaner's scorn,
For the sake of the millions yet unborn
And the goal of the right that seems.

His kinsmen saw but the waste of dower
And warned of the wretched gain.
The forge and book and the midnight hour,
That knew the man in the secret tower,
Could marvel the mortal brain.

From a drop of rain and a quoin of steel,
A coal and a grain of sand,
He fashioned a lamp for a kingdom's weal,
And laid man's work on the arc of a wheel
And watered a wasted land.

THE PEASANT'S PRAYER

THE roan cow rests content under the trees
That shade the lane's end. Nearer, bumble-bees
With golden thighs grip the sweet flowers
Of the sun-lighted bridal-wreath. No showers
Have laid the dry loam, and dust veils
The dragman's team as wearily it trails
The warping frame over the ochre ground
Sloping to the blue marsh-edge. The main sound
A fitful creaking of the half-shadowed mill
That rests from labor, like a true bard, until
Some god's good wind comes on to bid it move.
No song but the faint cooing of a dove
Lonely on the barn-ridge, mourning a mate.

Here, in my tired heart, early and late,
Shadows, dim lights, sounds of forgotten years,
Old sorrow-songs from memory of tears.
I have not known great love—the less to grieve—
Nor hated ought but to its course must cleave.
To books of wisdom, mirth and things of beauty
I could not give the hour forepledged to Duty
Calling on busy hands. Ill fares the soul!

Around my life of labor scroll on scroll
Of wonders I cannot read, music unheard
By my dull ears. How understand the word

The night-stars speak and language of the winds?
Grass is pasture; wheat, bread. To other minds
Symbols of God—mystery divinely sweet.
To us—man, cow or bee—but straw and meat.

Mine the gray toil; all fair illusion yours.
O, grant me, yet, one dream—one that secures
My childish hope of comfort in the grave
And love beyond! This gone, what do we peasants
save?

THE POET VAGRANT

WERE I to die this hour or some near day—
Be stricken quick upon the way I've trod,
Say not 'tis sad the youth has passed away
So reft of fortune and so far from God.

Say not in pity that I might have had
The gift and favor of the rich and great—
But that mischosen insolence forbade
My fellows' warning of a hapless fate.

Grieve not that I have spent my years in dream,
And drifted listless as the vagrant brook—
Have sought me substance in the things that seem,
And left to earth the semblance of a book.

What though I have not where to lay my head,
Nor marble weight upon my body's grave?—
Of this I make no moan when I am dead
And you possess the worth I failed to save.

So be it I am soon forgot of men
And laid in alien soil by stranger hands;—
The pines above my head will mourn me then,
And waves intone my requiem on the sands.

Say rather, this: "He chose to make his friends
In wood and field, with bird and flower and tree;
Began his labor where our labor ends,
And saved—the faith in immortality."

JAPAN THE BEAUTIFUL

THE ghost of grace through heathen tides and
times,

Hath kept her vigil 'neath thy trembling stars!

Thy cherry-blossom cheeks, in peace or wars,

Beam in rapport with all thy sweetest chimes!

New states may grow where fallen states have
been;—

The pulse of Beauty, dead, shall beat no more!

Thine not the cause of wall and tower and
store;—

Thy citadels are laid in hearts of men!

MY BIRTHDAY

FULL sure this day would find me older,
The late weeks were gray with fear
To feel at once my life-fire smoulder
In ashes of the year.

I heard the impatient mace of Duty
Beat the post of my outer door,
And saw the ghosts of indignant Beauty
And spent Hours count my store.

I thought to keep the day unvaunted,
Sealed in tasks—until forgot—
Avoid the friendly feast so haunted
Of Youth that now was not.

Then came a perfume from the mountains,
A message heart-warm from the west;
Singers with songs like lyric fountains.
A book of verse, a guest.

A great white steamer crossed the water,
Bride-proud in the summer blue;
Moving like some Olympian daughter,
On cycles ever new.

And then I woke new-born to living
And learned my Soul is ever young—
As a life of love and self-forgiving,
A song forever sung.

I fear the waiting wrath no longer,
I count the measured years no loss;
I take the road before me stronger
Shouldering my cross.

THE CALL OF THE WINDS

I FAIN would laugh with all the laughing world,
And let the relic memories be furled
With banners of crusades and laid away
With tomes and trumpery of the older day;
With crooning history, Time's romance, be done—
Let ages die, and wake the "On and on!"

And yet in dreaming hours, despite my will,
Past friends and fading pictures linger still.
Old wars with all their wrongs, caesars and kings
With all their crimes and ancient clamorings,
And troubadours, and pirates of the sea—
Seem still to mock our lauded Liberty.
Somehow when I would tempt the tuneful strings
I find them fraught with hymns of buried things—
I hear the cadence of the awkward flail,
And Indians moaning on the bison-trail.

The clanking enginery of modern strife
Profanes the obsequies of sweeter life.
There's grandeur in the press of steam and steel,
But heart-beats in the throb of oaken keel!
And on the winds a runic wail of doom
Pursues the tattered sail and trembling boom
Of one-time stately ships. The hulks, all mute,
Swing off in funeral pomp; and in pursuit

The squadron hounds of fretful Commerce bay
Their greed of wealth and ruthless pride of prey!

A golden glory filled the sea and air
When Turner saw the failing Temeraire!
No harmonies contest the sunset fire,
The fondest fancies haunt the Autumn pyre;
So, when the Muses seek the tender theme,
They find the treasure passing toward a dream!

LOUISIANA

OUT of the ash of Ages
Damp with the tide of Time,
Over the reeking pages
Red with the Heathen Crime—
Here hath the Forest Fable
Fought with the corpse of Fear,
Building a barracked gable
Learned of a Savage leer.

Spite of the mountain and torrent,
Huron and hunger and bear;
Praying in plagues abhorrent,
Minding of Midasan blare—
Jesuit, knight and trader,
Crozier and steel and skin,
Fool-of-the-Fountain and raider,
Founders of Faith and Sin—
Chanted their cryptical Aves
On through the wilds of the Years,
Laying their laws as lavas
Hot with the blood and the tears.

In mounds of a memory faded,
The Kingdoms planted their feet;
The stream where the bittern waded
Thronged of a throbbing fleet,

Mine and Timber and Meadow
Meet their debt to the Dead,
And over the shame and the shadow
The Sachem of Peace is led!

Hewer and digger and tinker,
Hammer and hoe and shear;
Loaner and lover and thinker,
Poet and painter and seer—
Shoveled the sand to building,
Tethered the river to power,
Pounded the rock to gilding—
And looked on Temple and Tower!

THE DRAGON CITY

IN this unchanging shaft-light hour by hour,
Pent in and comfortless, the city's power
Goes grinding on around me; and the sky,
A somber square the empty winds go by,
Scarce marks the transit of the night or day.
A million unfixed spirits take their way
Beneath my keep, nor seem to reckon why
They tempt a dragon, follow far, and die!

I marvel I could quit the peace of fields
For this, where all our fervent sowing yields
But mortal thorns to weave us penal crowns!
I have not learned the tenets of the towns:
I seem disarmed where every man contends,
Denying virtue and rejecting friends!

Where I have wandered, on the northern hills,
A Presence full of power and promise fills
Our hearts with common joy; and there we learn
How comradeship and simple trust will turn
The fear of beast and enmity of men.
But what avails the code I gathered then?
The God of farther places *here* they scorn,
And flout the solemn faiths that *I* have sworn!

Were men but rude, like some unlettered breed,
Then might I stand, as one who knew the creed;
But here are sinuous ways and sultan smiles,
Soft insolence, diplomacies and wiles.
These subtler crafts plain men can never know;
And fall as falls the unresisting snow!

From this most pitiless of human mills
I wonder I am not among the hills,
Whose faithful benediction followed me!
And I am pained of infidelity
At parting from the pines and golden sands
And old-time friends—the warm and rugged hands
Of long-true friends! I wonder I should roam
This way! My heart is *there*—and there is *home*!

A SWALLOW ON A TELEGRAPH WIRE

BATHED in red sun and gladdened by the wind
A swallow sat upon a span of wire.
He chirped the hours away with idle mind
And preened the feathers of his staid attire.

The news of all the world ran through his feet—
The word of birth and sound of wedding-bells;
The cry of pain and laughter of the street,
Earth's sorrow and the sin that life compels.

Whether the message were of ill or good,
A moment's joy or grieving bitter-long;
Of blatant clamouring or solitude—
The swallow shot to earth the one glad song.

So might I share the swallow's faithful heart,
And know the shadow and the light of life—
I'd go on singing through the busy mart,
And find a symphony in mortal strife.

IN MICHIGAN

SLOW-YIELDING Nymphs
Evade unpandered Satyrs here,
And sands unconquered laugh at man's invention.
Bright clouds drive darker shadows,
And the bay-breeze bears heavy odors—
Odor-offerings of ragged pine
And spruce.

The white-birch single on the hillside,
The hemlock, and I
Are friends
In Michigan.

Nature's fingers
Seem to play upon my strings
In minor harmonies up here—
Where shells of convents shelter
Echoes only,
And the last Indian has laid
His flints and legends
On the grave-mound of the older time
In Michigan.

THE SANDPIPER

PRIME indignity of solitude—
To smile! But smiles intrude
When thou, so tipsy bi-ped,
Teetering on twine-legs and toes of thread
Through the thin surf-lace,
Cry thy very name and place
In uncompanioned fear—alarmed
Of man, of me, unarmed
With any weapon worse
Than irony or any curse
But Titan-laughter. Even thy grace
Would scarce invite my greed,
So much as win my sympathy—
As one with thee!
Scant wonder that thy hammer-head
Cannot look up—with such a bodkin tail
And crop of indescribable wet feed!
Silence would avail
More than thy frantic piping, much—
With that quaint running-gear and such
An insufficient wing to clutch
The air that lends the sea-gull speed.
Scarcely risen from your tracks before
You falter and dip down,
Like a vellum toy
Cast on the wind by a coolie boy,

Or like some wing-trouser'd clown
Ascending gloriously to the floor
Whence he but started—
And returned ere he departed.

But the Maker, fashioning the eagle,
Fashioned thee, dear little wader,
To the perfect pattern of His hand!
Perfect in thy way, as regal
As a king-seal, and man's persuader
Of his own futility in slipping sand!
The Carpenter of thy splint frame
And that unreasoning child-cry
Matched thy tenderness in every poet's eye—
To guard thy innocence and praise thy name.

THE WAR GARDENS

IN the North's brief recessional of snows
These long, green garden-rows,
Shot with red-in-shadow and occasional
Mottlings of yellow—leaves that fall
In prophecy of autumn and the frost—
These quiet gardens, flourishing a day, are host
To armies of democracy. And those drab ranks
Are touched of red likewise, and yellow death flanks
Their columns—as with the blight of leaves
Anticipating higher tasks, or the slow decay of
 sheaves
Ungarnered and regretful of the thresher's negli-
 gence.

But for these loyal acres and plaid hills of Provi-
 dence,
And the strong lads, singing of love, to cultivate—
Surely the eager purposes must wait
And Winds convene, distraught of dumb
Casualties, to wither what of earth
Held tardy promise and a pledge of worth
For planting. Then were the loud year come
Lean to unending winter and the grief
Of yon untimely-yellowed leaf.

TO A SEA-GULL

SEEING you, through the pleasant June,
Fixed on a shore-rock, like an ivory thing,
Or some, more animate, buffoon
Changing foot with foot's locality
To keep place in the noon—
Loth to move
And unconcerned to see
Even thy perfect image in the pale-green cove:
One would scarce surmise
What winds were in your wing
Waiting a larger enterprise.

How will the indifference depart,
And what mad pranks
From the nursery of thy brave heart,
Come to the fore—
When storms bend down to sweep
The sea-floor,
And stir the dead that sleep
In the green weeds under the jetsam planks!
It is man's lamenting wonder
How that the bellowing thunder
And wild lightning and slant rain
Make you to laugh, tho' with a note of pain;
And cry, mockingly, with glad laughter.

Is it that your care foretells a peace hereafter?
Or that thy natural hour hath come at length—
Against long waiting
Or idle incident of mating—
With new tasks matched to thy great strength?

But yesterday
One of thy kinsmen lay
Quiet in my trembling hand.
Blinded by death, it was, and the wet sand.
He seemed not less than thy own image,
In the shore-surf; and not once ill at ease
Had this white body been, nor worse for damage
Nor perturbed by struggle with calamities.

Thou, bird of more than grace and beauty—
Sleek house-ward of the rooms of bight and bay;
Friend of man and sexton in thy casual duty—
Take me to brotherhood this day!
My morning and the warm sun have stood me long,
And I am weary of the rest
And the old monotony of mating-song;
And I am tired of my own nest
And my own image in the still pools of the west.
Teach me thy fearlessness of thunder
And the wind and the red rain that is—
Over the nations! Failing this—
Teach me, O bird-god, faith and calm wonder!





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